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SUBJECT: AIT NOMINATION FOR THE SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE: CHENG YEN

REF: STATE 99729

¶1. (U) AIT wishes to nominate Buddhist leader CHENG Yen for the Secretary's Award for International Women of Courage. Dharma Master Cheng Yen was born in Chingshui, a town in central Taiwan, in 1937. In 1966, she established the Tzu Chi Foundation, which concentrates its activities in four areas: charity, medicine, education, and culture. Cheng Yen's Tzu Chi Foundation has grown into an international organization with over 5 million supporters and over 30,000 members who carry out its mission globally. Cheng Yen, herself, has been awarded the Eisenhower Medallion for her contributions to world peace and was nominated in 1996 for the Nobel Peace Prize for her tireless dedication to bringing a vision of compassion in action to areas suffering from disaster and conflict.

¶2. (U) On the basis of Cheng Yen's axiom, "Nothing is more valuable than life. All beings are equal," the Tzu Chi Foundation provides relief worldwide to victims of war, flood, and drought, sending supplies to victims and volunteers to help them rebuild their lives. The Tzu Chi Foundation, which firmly believes in putting aid directly into the hands of those who need it, has provided more than USD 2 million in medical care, supplies, and financial support to victims of 9/11, more than USD 4 million in shopping cards, bedding, and medical care and supplies to victims of Hurricane Katrina, and, in cooperation with Knightsbridge International, a Christian NGO, distributed more than eight 40-foot containers filled with cooking oil, blankets, shoes, rice, and medicines to refugees in north and west Afghanistan. In 2008, the Tzu Chi Foundation established long-term disaster relief efforts after the devastating earthquakes in the Szechuan province of China. The Foundation has built hospitals, colleges, and research centers as well as developed educational, social, and cultural programs for local communities.

¶3. (U) Full legal name: Ms. SHIH Cheng Yen
Job title/association: Founder, Tzu Chi Foundation
Date of birth: 04-May-1937
Country of birth: Taiwan
Citizenship: ROC
Contact information: Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, No.1, Lane 88, Jingshe Street, Kanglo Village, Sing-Cheng Hsiang, Hualien County, 97150, Taiwan. Tel: 886-3-8266779, fax: 886-3-8267776
Passport number: None

¶4. (U) AIT Women's Issues POC is Political Officer Deanna Kim, tel: 886-2-21622086.
SYOUNG